

Meeting of 1997-10-30 Special Meeting

MINUTES
SPECIAL CALLED MEETING
LAWTON CITY COUNCIL
OCTOBER 30, 1997 - 5:00 P.M.
WAYNE GILLEY CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBER

John T. Marley, Mayor Also Present:
Presiding Gil Schumpert, City Manager
 John Vincent, Sr. Asst. City Attorney
 Brenda Smith, City Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 5:03 p.m. by Mayor Marley. Notice of meeting and agenda were posted on the City Hall bulletin board as required by State law.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Richard Williams, Ward Two
 Jeff Sadler, Ward Three
 John Purcell, Ward Four
 Robert Shanklin, Ward Five
 Charles Beller, Ward Six
 Carol Green, Ward Seven
 Randy Warren, Ward Eight

ABSENT: Jody Maples, Ward One

BUSINESS ITEM:

1. Consider a change in Residential Solid Waste Collection Service and take necessary action. Exhibits: Proposed Alternatives; Summary of Oklahoma Cities Solid Waste Collection Systems; Cities with Fully Automated, Semi-Automated Refuse Collection.

Shanklin said he brought this up some time back with the idea of trying to reduce the waste stream in the form of grass clippings to the landfill and that it was not meant to reduce services at all. He said everyone had received calls asking that twice a week pick up remain and that services not be reduced. Shanklin said he had no intention of reducing services, but that discussion was needed by Council and the public as to how the stream of grass clippings to the landfill can be reduced. He said grass clippings can be eliminated from items that will be picked up or possibly charge a per bag fee, and that citizen input is needed.

Jerry Ihler, Public Works/Engineering Director, said on the Summary of Cities 30,000 to 100,000 population, a correction is needed in the number of employees for the City of Lawton and the correct number is 55. On the next page with regard to automated and semi-automated services, number of crews, City of Moore shows nine but it should be six; Midwest City shows 14 and it should be seven. He said approximately 26,000 trips are made per year by citizens taking their trash to the landfill, which is about 85 vehicles per day.

Ihler said ten cities were contacted, including Lawton, for purposes of comparison of services, costs, etc. All provide solid waste collection services and only Muskogee has a private firm collecting 10% of the waste. Fees range from \$6.50 to \$9.67 per month. Broken Arrow charges \$6.50 for curbside with twice a week pick up, but they charge \$1 a bag for yard waste. The average home puts out 4-5 bags of yard waste so if you pay an extra \$4 a week, there would be an additional \$16 per month charge for solid waste collection. Schumpert said information shows a charge of \$25 for a special request pick up and Ihler said that is for brush and tree limbs, and that is an additional charge made in Broken Arrow also.

Ihler said five of the ten cities have once a week pick up and five have twice a week. Norman has twice a week but it is once a week for household trash and the second pick up is yard waste. Those who have automated or semi-automated equipment can operate with one individual for automated and semi-automated can be operated with one but the person has to get out of the truck and connect the equipment, dump it, return it and return to the truck so

most have two man crews for semi-automated.

Shanklin said he thought Normans collection was privatized. Ihler said they did not indicate that during the survey. Ihler said the City of Moore was privatized at one time and recently canceled their privatization contract and returned to the city doing the collection.

Ihler said all the cities pick up yard waste. Only Norman separates yard waste and they have a composting operation. Moore has a \$2 per bag after five bag charge for yard waste. Midwest City allows five bags and after that the charge is \$5 per bag, and this may be an incentive to compost or mulch yard waste or haul it personally.

Ihler said staff visited Moore, Midwest City and Edmond, which have either fully or semi automated systems. Cost of a semi-automated truck with side loader is about \$110,000; fully automated trucks cost about \$140,000; Lawtons rear load packers cost about \$80,000.

Williams said a price of \$3,800 each is shown to retrofit the existing packer trucks and asked if that is for semi-automated. Ihler said yes, rear semi-automated. Ihler said you can put one or two on the automated rear loaders on the retrofit, and staff thought it would be more effective to have dual rear automation so it would be about \$7,000 to retrofit each truck.

Beller asked what the retrofit accomplishes, does it pick up the unit on the curb and empty it. Ihler said yes, we would have to purchase specialized containers, which are either 90 gallon or 105 gallon containers, which are on rollers; crews roll them to the automation unit which picks them up, dumps them and brings them back down, and the individual would roll them back to the curb. Ihler said a two man crew would be needed, a driver and someone to pull the containers to the semi-automated unit.

Purcell asked about the fully automated units. Ihler said they looked at those in Edmond and there is only one operator; the truck pulls up to the curb, the arms reach out and slap around the container, dump it, bring it back and drop it to the side. Purcell asked if we could have the same number of trucks with one individual per truck. Ihler said fully automated and semi-automated were only about to pick up about 650 to 750 units per day; current three man crews pick up about 1,100 units per day, so if we continue twice a week pick up, additional trucks would be needed. Ihler said about 16 trucks would be needed for the automated service.

Beller said he did not think this was broke and Council should not be trying to fix it. He said he thought it should be left as it is now and the division is doing a great job. Beller said the automation may be something for the future, but not now, and people are interested in saving space in the landfill from grass clippings and yard waste and that Council should discuss that. He said he would rather see a composting system than the automation.

Williams said he thought long term Council should be looking at an automated system. He said he was not in favor of eliminating people as employees but was interested in looking at the options for the next 5-10 years and it would be a way to reduce costs. Beller said he thought there would be maintenance problems with the automated units, but Council should look at better ways to handle the yard waste.

Warren said there could be fewer employees through attrition, although there is not much attrition in the division, and Council might look at phasing in the automation. He said the key item now is keeping grass out of the landfill. Warren asked if we had twice a week trash only pick up, would it be possible to have another pick up for grass only for those who wanted to pay for that service. Most yard waste is put out on Monday and Tuesday. He asked if it would be beneficial to have centralized points in town for large trucks to take the grass to the landfill area rather than having those trucks make the trips to save time. Ihler said alternatives five and six in the packet address a somewhat similar concept.

Ihler said staff was trying to offer a recommendation on where we would be five years from now, and because we have rear loading packer trucks, the best approach would be to have semi automated pick up with pick up in the rear. The same number of crews would be needed due to the time factors involved and once a week pick up to be able to cover the entire city. Ihler said we somehow need to get to the point where citizens would accept once a week pick up and possibly be able to cover it with once a week pick up for household and once a week yard waste pick up. He said if the citizens are not agreeable to that, there would be a need for more trucks and crews to go to semi automated; crew numbers would drop from three to two, or to one with fully automated. 25% of the pickups are in alleys, which have insufficient room to have the fully automated system. The thought was to go to semi automated and next year budget for one-fourth of the City and go into a cycle like that; that would take 7,000 containers at \$55 each and retrofitting five trucks for that first phase.

Mayor Marley said that is helpful information but Council requested discussion on keeping yard waste out of the landfill. He asked what had come about from discussions with Fort Sill. Ihler said a meeting was held with Col. Nelson and Ron Barnett at Fort Sill; discussion was Lawton having one day a week trash pick up and one day a week yard waste pick up, taking the yard waste to Fort Sills composting operation, along with the sludge from the Wastewater Treatment Plant because both are instrumental in a composting operation. Ihler said another meeting

was set for October 15 but it was canceled.

Williams asked if staff had talked to Fort Sill about the possibility of Lawton taking over their waste stream; Fort Sill has privatized some services and may have a long term goal to get out of that business and Lawton will remain in that business and has a great asset with the landfill. Ihler said discussion was held on the services Lawton provides that Fort Sill may be contracting out in the future. Fort Sill currently contracts out solid waste collection and recently approved a new contract, but both parties were interested in that subject from solid waste collection to managing infrastructure of water, sewer and so forth. Ihler said such items were discussed but it had not gone further; taking Fort Sills solid waste to the landfill would increase the flow of waste. Williams said a shredder would save space. Mayor Marley said Fort Sill cannot pay money for Lawton picking up their waste but would have to offer a service in return, and that is one of the problems. Williams said Fort Sill pays for the water. Mayor Marley said they cannot pay for this service and Williams said Lawton could put in a bid.

Purcell said Council is trying to determine how to pick grass clippings but has not decided what to do with it, and the object is to not put it in the landfill. He said he thought automation should be done and maybe just start buying automated trucks as they are bought in the normal course, although it would take longer.

Ihler said options for grass clippings are to take it to Fort Sills composting operation (agreement required); or place it in the C & D, or another closed, area to mix and supplement daily cover. Purcell asked if Lawton could compost. Ihler said it is an alternative.

Mayor Marley asked if all the garbage bags are biodegradable. Ihler said most are, but not all.

Shanklin said there is an inequity in the amounts of trash put out by different people. He said Wards 1, 3, 5 and 7 do not put out as much grass clippings as other areas so they are not causing the landfill to fill up as quickly but would be asked to pay to expand it when necessary; those who are filling it up should have to pay for it. Shanklin said crews work four days and get paid for five, and did not know when they finish in winter but would like to know the average time the crews finish and sometimes they are off for the day at 11 or 11:30 a.m. He said Council needs to know that and should sell bags from the fire stations to residents to use if they want to put out grass. Shanklin said residents would have to help by using biodegradable bags and separating the grass. He said a pilot program could be done in Ward 4 to see how it would work. Shanklin said placing grass clippings in the landfill is not good management of public resources and funding.

Shanklin said he remembered Bill Baker telling him they picked up 117 bags at one house, although Baker could not remember that and later said 60, but that it was an illustration of the inequity of service provided for the same payment.

Warren asked how many times the crew that comes to his house on Monday morning goes to the dump. Gerald Woods, Solid Waste Supervisor, said three times in the summer and once in the winter on average. Warren asked if a centralized place to dump would be a savings rather than the crews driving all the way to the landfill. Woods said the landfill is 3-1/2 miles out and the cost effective range to have a transfer station is 10 miles from pick up to the landfill.

Williams asked the expected life of the landfill and Ihler said the estimate is 16-17 years. Schumpert said the response to DEQ was 17 years. Shanklin asked if that included all the cells that have not been completed and Ihler said yes.

Beller said crews run the route, not walk them, and we are getting our dollars worth for their service. Mayor Marley said we are not interested in the collection service right now; information is needed on the yard waste aspect. Information was provided on how to get it to the landfill but the objective is to not put it in the landfill. Mayor Marley said a recommendation should be returned on what would be done with the yard waste and that would determine how it should be collected.

Schumpert said if the grass is separated it will be taken to Fort Sill or to a closed area of the landfill to be used as part of daily cover; those things cannot be done now because it is co-mingled. Purcell said another option is to not pick up grass clippings and not accept at the landfill. Schumpert said that may work in very large cities but that practice in Lawton may result in grass being dumped in bar ditches. Schumpert said he felt an extra charge would be reasonable and that people could mulch.

Sadler said his concern was getting the grass in a truck by itself without the household waste; something could be done with it if it were separated. He said not picking it up would not be an acceptable alternative.

Sadler said he did not want to charge people to buy bags and then charge another \$1 per bag for those over five. He said the City can sell the bags and that would help with the costs, then we would pick up whatever number of bags they put out. Sadler said no one would have to keep track of the number of bags put out to be collected

because they would have been paid for when the bags were purchased from the City.

Williams asked what it would cost to get into the composting business. Schumpert said one firm gave a price of \$7 million to start and \$2 million a year to operate to compost everything; Fort Sill has spent a lot of money on composting and it has not worked. Ihler said Fort Sill has the facility and both Lawton and Fort Sill should not have separate composting operations if both communities can be serviced with one operation. Ihler said Woods indicated we could start in composting for about \$500,000 for just yard waste.

Warren said we cannot tell people we want to collect grass separately without telling them what we will do with it once we get it; both have to come together at the same time. Ihler said if citizens will not accept the separation or collection method, it will not work. Schumpert said the key question is whether there will be once a week household and once a week trash, or twice a week trash with a separate route for grass, which will be more costly. Schumpert said if this were to happen today, the yard waste would be used in alternate daily cover; at a given time, Fort Sill may want the grass, as well as the sludge.

Green said similar discussions were held six months ago and the citizens clearly indicated the preference for twice a week pickup of trash. She said if grass clippings are to be collected separately, it would have to be by a separate pickup in addition to twice a week pickup of trash.

Shanklin said he visited Edmond a few years back because they had separated yard waste, it was not in biodegradable bags and it was a mess. He said they have since abandoned that operation. Shanklin said Edmond tried picking up yard waste on Wednesday, and that caused a problem because yard work is done on weekends and it had laid there until Wednesday before being picked up.

Purcell said if we are going to use it for landfill cover, and people will not accept less than twice a week trash pickup, we should determine the cost to make a separate run on each Monday to pick up grass clippings in bags the City sells them for \$1 per bag at the fire stations. Sadler said the theory is the bag sales should pay for the service. Ihler said staff can do any of the alternatives if sufficient funding is provided; one of the alternatives indicated a third run and there are currently 13 residential crews, and if the residents will put out their grass separately, we can reduce the number of crews down to about nine or ten, and take the other three or four crews and on Monday, they pick up one-fourth of the City, and on Tuesday, they pick up one-fourth of the City, yard waste only, and so forth throughout the week. Ihler said since trash crews would not be picking up grass, they should be able to service more units, and the crews which come behind them would pick up only yard waste and could cover more area. Purcell asked if yard waste would have to be picked up four days a week and Ihler said you could not provide two day a week pickup of trash to the rest of the residents under that situation. Schumpert said it could work at \$1 per bag but if everyone wants yard waste picked up on Monday, a figure would have to be returned on how many additional crews would be needed.

Ihler said the 13 crews currently cover half of the City with each pickup. Purcell said not every house will have yard waste. Warren said fewer people would have yard waste at \$1 per bag. Schumpert said it may encourage mulching.

Beller said tonight Council wants to direct staff to bring back something to take care of yard waste, do not change the current twice a week pickup, and devise a system for picking up yard waste and a surcharge should probably be considered for that service. Schumpert asked if it would have to be on Monday and Tuesday and response was whatever can be worked out as a recommendation. Ihler said alternative fives and six address the questions somewhat. Warren said they did not want to limit the amounts, but wanted people to buy bags from the City to defray the additional costs.

Shanklin said four foremen go around the crews and could be advance scouts to see where grass clippings are because they are isolated and there is no since going up and down the alleys in Wards 5 and 7 because there will be nothing to pick up, and the crews probably know now where they will be. Woods said the crews would have to go by each house in case something is there.

Mayor Marley said staff would return a plan. He said we do not want a reduction in solid waste pickup service but we do want a separate pickup for the grass clipping and a plan on how to implement that and how it will be paid for. He said if you want to throw in a five or ten year plan for automation, that is fine, but right now, we are really interested in getting this one item done.

Green asked that persons in the audience be allowed to speak and Council agreed to receive comment.

Mary Kilgore, Elgin, Oklahoma, said she was with Stewards of the Earth and had been doing recycling for about four years. She thanked Council for considering composting and said as garbage crews are picking up household waste only, they would shorten the times of their routes so they might be able to back that same day to pick up part of the grass clippings.

Katherine Hilman Haley, Geronimo, OK, said she had been working in Lawton on the once a month recycling days on the second Saturday of each month; they work at 16th and Taylor from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and receive approximately 150 households coming through with recyclable items. She said they, along with the Sierra Club and other volunteers, unload the items and separate them. Haley said November 15 is the first national America Recycles Day; the solid waste stream can be reduced by 80% if citizens will recycle. Haley said in 4-1/2 years they had recycled more than one million pounds of newspaper and cardboard, which save the City about \$25,000 in landfill fees.

Williams said he would like to see automation plans started and asked if progress was being made on getting a grinder. Schumpert said it was in last years proposal and would be in the coming years proposal.

COMMENTS

Schumpert said a meeting would be held November 1 at Golden Corral at 2:30 p.m. for prize distribution with regard to Fire Prevention Month. He held up signs as examples of displays to be shown for public information on television before Council meetings and also during executive sessions. Schumpert said the grand opening of the Museum will be held this weekend.

Green said the final housing seminar is tonight at 6:30 p.m. at the Owens Multi-Purpose Center.

Mayor Marley said Trick or Treat will be tomorrow from 6 - 8 p.m. and that children will be coming through City Hall from 3 to 4:30 p.m.

There was no further business and the meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.